

Early metallic artefacts of adornment in Portugal

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Abstract

This article aims to define the cultural context of a set of metallic artefacts of adornment related to the early presence of 'Barbarian' people in Portugal, more specifically, from the last decades of the 4th century until the beginning of the 6th. The adornments, made of gold and bronze and mainly worn over costume, were recovered from several sites, with different chronological and cultural contexts. The analysis and interpretation developed in this text attempt to sort the artefacts according to a typology, in order to discuss their affiliation and chronology. In the process, a comparison is made between the Portuguese artefacts and those from well-known sites, namely burial sites located in the Danubian area or in the Spanish territory.

Keywords

Metallic artefacts, adornment, Portuguese territory

1 Introduction

In the Portuguese territory, only seven archaeological sites (fig. 1) have so far provided artefacts of adornment related to the early presence of people of Germanic origin: Beiral do Lima (Ponte de Lima); Falperra (Braga); Briteiros (Guimarães); Castelo Velho (Vila Nova de Foz Côa); Conimbriga (Condeixa-a-Nova); Monsanto (Idanha-a-Nova); Santa Clara de Louredo (Beja)².

However, it is important to note that these sites have different chronological and cultural contexts. Indeed, the first one, Beiral do Lima, is a burial site, probably with two occupation phases: first, Roman or Late Roman, thereafter Vandalic or associated with the passage of the Sueves³. In Falperra, apart from a Bronze Age settlement, a paleo-Christian basilica was discovered, and some objects, dated to the 5th – 6th century⁴. In Briteiros, a large Iron Age settlement subsequently occupied by Romans⁵, some early medieval objects were found. A similar situation was observed in Castelo Velho, a prehistoric site whose first occupation dates from the third millennium BC⁶. From Conimbriga, a well known *oppidum* converted into a Roman *municipium* which was invaded by Suevic people in the 5th century⁷, the largest set of artefacts of adornment was recovered, mainly worn over costume: nine bronze fibulae and three buckles. Monsanto da Beira only yielded a buckle, of which the ends are the heads of a beast⁸. However, we do not know anything about the place where it was recovered. Finally, there is Beja, a burial site, discovered in the 19th century after the demolition of Santa Clara de Louredo Monastery⁹. Nevertheless, it has never been excavated, so its size and features are still unknown¹⁰.

2 Methods and materials

The artefacts of adornment presented in this article come from highly diverse sites. Many of them do not give any clues regarding their archaeological context. Therefore, our work was based primarily on analysis of these materials dispersed across the Portuguese territory, a methodology that has some inherent limitations. To analyse the artefacts, we attempted to study them directly in the institutions where they are held. In two cases this was not possible because the work was not authorised.

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² Arezes 2011, 131-132.

³ Barroca 1987, 84; Quiroga 2001, 117.

⁴ Sousa 1968/70, 3-5; 10; Sousa 1973, 9.

⁵ Silva 2007, 14-17.

⁶ Jorge 2004, 586, 593.

⁷ Alarcão & Étienne 1977, 9-10; Alarcão 1994, 7, 11-12.

⁸ Rodríguez-Aragón & Escartín 1989, 222, 224; Rodríguez-Aragón 1992, 246.

⁹ Viana 1953, 186; Almeida 1962, 239, 251.

¹⁰ Aillagon & Roberto 2008, 364.

In all cases, however, bibliographic information on the subject was available as a resource, although it mostly consisted of isolated articles. Nevertheless, the bibliographical sources proved to be extremely important, since they enabled us to compare the Portuguese artefacts with those from well-known sites, such as burial sites located in the peninsular territory and in the Danubian area.

Our approach to early metallic adornments begins by discussing the artefacts recovered from a site in northwest Portugal, at

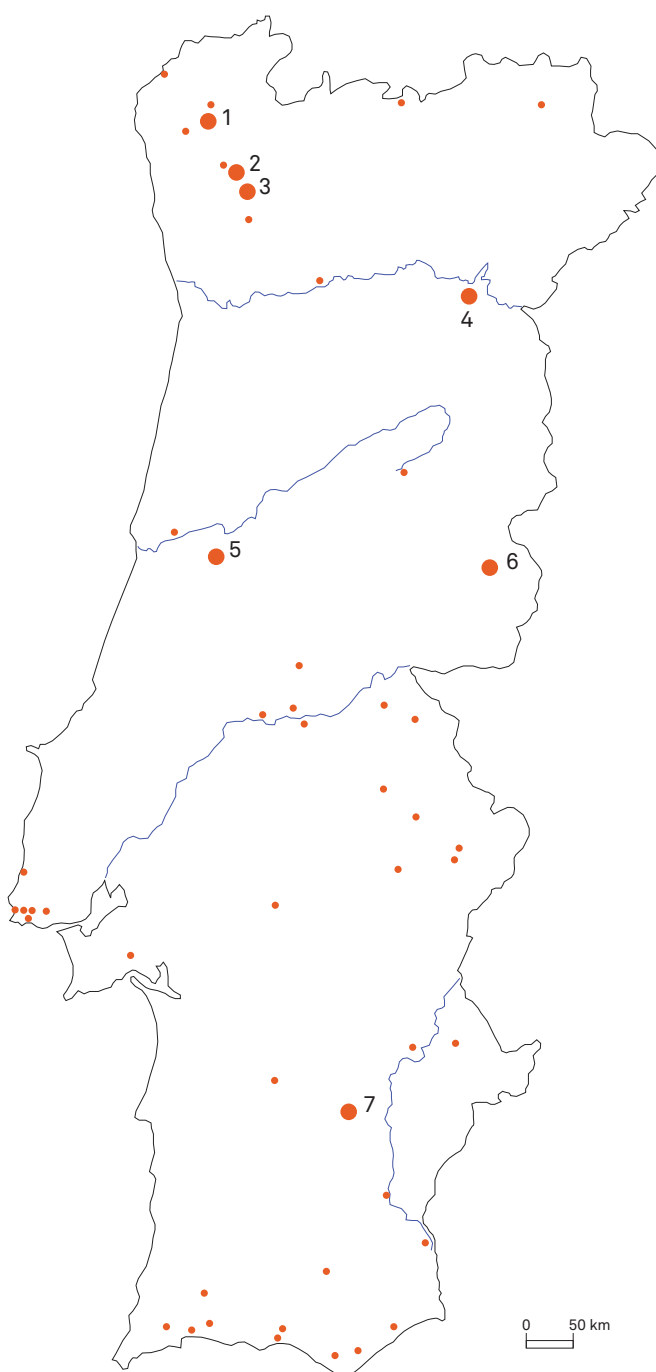
Beiral do Lima. We then proceed according to the relationships established between the various findings, from a typological, chronological and cultural problematising perspective.

2.1 Ring and diadem (Beiral do Lima)

This burial site, located at a property in the northwest of Portugal, was revealed in the course of agricultural work and subsequently robbed and damaged.¹¹ Several objects associated with the site, namely glass and amber necklace beads, and the metallic

FIG. 1 Map of the Portuguese territory, on which are marked all the known sites from where early medieval metallic artefacts of adornment have been recovered. The numbered points correspond only to those that allowed the collection of the set of early objects discussed in this article. These sites are:

- 1: Beiral do Lima (Ponte de Lima).
- 2: Falperra (Braga).
- 3: Briteiros (Guimarães).
- 4: Castelo Velho (Vila Nova de Foz Côa).
- 5: Conimbriga (Condeixa-a-Nova).
- 6: Monsanto (Idanha-a-Nova).
- 7: Santa Clara de Louredo (Beja).



personal adornments that we have analysed, were recovered from the soil accumulated near the graves. They were about twenty graves; some had been constructed with *tegula* and contained no objects, the rest were graves excavated in the substrate, which have yielded an intact collection of glass vases and pottery¹². The artefacts from Beiral were initially exhibited in the Museum of Ethnography and History of Littoral Douro, in Oporto¹³. When this museum closed some of these materials (pottery and glass) were transferred to the Archaeology Museum D. Diogo de Sousa in Braga, and the others (metallic adornments) to the National Archaeology Museum, in Lisbon¹⁴.

Some interesting aspects of the ring and the diadem are worth highlighting. The ring¹⁵ (fig. 2), made of solid gold¹⁶, has *cloisonné* decoration, using sixteen encrusted coloured garnets around an empty cavity that has lost its decorative element. The symmetrical and radial design of the ring makes it look like a rosette; moreover, the profusion of ornamentation reveals a complete rejection of “emptiness”¹⁷.

Two pins, more than thirty pendants and eight necklace beads with different shapes constitute the diadem¹⁸. It was probably deposited in the same grave as the ring¹⁹. Rigaud de Sousa has pointed out some possible parallels to this artefact, although he recognised that none of the indicated objects were identical to the one recovered from Beiral²⁰. More recently, López Quiroga searched for parallels to the diadem, having identified some objects found in princely tombs very similar to this adornment: one from Hochfelden (Strasbourg, France), another from Bakodpuszta (Hungary), a third from Kertsch (Ukraine) and yet another from a female grave in Untersiebenbrunn (Austria). They are all dated to between 380/400 – 440/450, corresponding to period D2, as defined by Tejral for Central and Eastern Europe. However, it is important to note that, in this case, as well as the findings of Vigo, the recovered artefacts pose problems concerning their ‘ethnic’ affiliation.

One hypothesis advanced points out the possibility that the Beiral finds could be part of the personal adornments of the wife of a ‘Barbarian’ military chief whose grave was located here. She would have been buried according to the Danubian way. Although it lacked the characteristic fibulae²¹, the burial could be generically linked to this particular ‘fashion’, developed mainly by sedentary Germanic tribes, who submitted to the Huns, from the late fourth to the middle of the fifth century²². On the other hand, König shows that this type of diadem can be regarded as identical to necklaces of Vandalic people found in Eastern Europe²³, since some parallels for the personal adornments of Beiral were discovered in the Danube river basin and seem to be related to the Untersiebenbrunn-Gospital-Naja culture, or to the Smolin-Kosino culture, defined in terms of aristocratic group’s objects, mainly discovered in female graves²⁴.



FIG. 2 Gold ring from Beiral do Lima, with *cloisonné* decoration, according to Almeida 1986, 32.

Some authors have associated artefacts related to the Untersiebenbrunn culture, in Gallaecia, with Vandalic people. In this sense, Beiral findings could attest the presence of Vandals in the north of Portugal in the first half of the 5th century. However, we should not reject the possibility that these materials could belong to Sueves, especially given the strong heterogeneity of Germanic groups that arrived in the Iberian Peninsula²⁵. And we must not forget that unlike the Vandals and the Alans, who did not establish themselves in the Portuguese territory, the Sueves founded a kingdom in northeast Portugal that survived until 585.

Finally, another theory can be advanced to explain the occurrence of these remarkable adornments, one which may also be apply to those recovered from Beja: ‘gift-giving’ sequences. These practices, working not only as a social or economic mechanism but also as a political strategy, established important relationships – although not necessarily of reciprocity – between the donor and the recipient²⁶. Obviously, it is very hard to define the meaning of a particular object to giver and recipient, and what the social relationship between the two was. Was one subservient to the other? Could ‘gift-giving’ be seen as the transfer of precious prestige artefacts, perhaps even as a resolution of conflict, without weapons²⁷? Several hypotheses will be considered in order to clarify this issue.

¹² Viana 1961, 9.

¹³ Lanhas 1969, 249; Sousa 1979, 295; Barroca 1987, 84–85.

¹⁴ Quiroga 2001, 117.

¹⁵ Viana 1961; Lanhas 1969, 240–260; Almeida 1979, 312; Sousa 1979, 293–304; Almeida 1986, 32; Barroca 1987, 83–88; Mattoso 1992, 328; Quiroga & Lovelle 1999, 231; Quiroga 2001, 117, 123; Resino 2003, 287, 296; *id.* 2004, 107, 128–129; Arezes 2011, 58, 119, 287–288.

¹⁶ Sousa 1979, 296.

¹⁷ Sousa 1979, 296; Barroca 1987, 85.

¹⁸ Viana 1961; Lanhas 1969, 246–260; Almeida 1979, 312; Sousa 1979, 293–304; Almeida 1986, 34; Barroca 1987, 83–88; Mattoso 1992, 341; García & Lobeiras 1996, 17; Quiroga & Lovelle 1999, 231–232; Quiroga 2001, 117; Resino 2003, 286–287, 296; *id.* 2004, 128–129; Arezes 2011, 58, 127–129, 367–368.

¹⁹ Barroca 1987, 86.

²⁰ Sousa 1979, 297.

²¹ Quiroga 2001, 117–118.

²² Rodríguez-Aragón 1997, 629.

²³ Resino 2003, 287.

²⁴ Quiroga 2001, 118.

²⁵ Quiroga 2001, 122.

²⁶ Curta 2006, 677.

²⁷ Curta 2006, 693.

2.2 Belt-buckles (Beja)

The objects recovered from Beja compose a very specific group, revealing some similarities to those from Beiral. Two gold belt buckles (fig. 3-4), with round plates and encrusted coloured garnets, an adornment (fig. 5) of which the function has not been completely defined, and a sword with an iron blade and gold adornment in the cross-guard compose the set²⁸. All these materials were decorated with a technique known as *cloisonné*, a polychrome style which reveals influences from Oriental civilizations, namely from Sassanid Persia, Scythia and Caucasus²⁹. In fact, it was only in the late 4th and during the 5th century that



FIG. 3 First belt-buckle from Beja. Made of gold, with *cloisonné* decoration and a zoomorphic needle. Photo courtesy of the National Archaeology Museum (Lisbon).



FIG. 4 Second belt-buckle from Beja. It is made of gold, with an inlay of red garnets. Photo courtesy of the National Archaeology Museum (Lisbon).

cloisonné decoration began to spread, mainly through the movements of 'Barbarian' people and through cultural interpenetration processes, which occurred gradually³⁰.

Materials such as those recovered from Beja usually occur in burial contexts. The two buckles and the adornment have direct parallels in the Untersiebenbrunn culture, based on burial treasures of great richness identified in regions submit to the Huns, whose chronological limits lie between 375 and 454, the year of the death of Attila³¹. Actually, Hun goldsmithing displays a clear predisposition to the use of garnet inlays, which appears to be a continuation of practices developed by Alans and Sarmatians. Nevertheless, with the Huns, goldsmithing became simpler – the colours tended to be monochrome and the work less careful³².

In the north of the Danube region the princely tombs of Untersiebenbrunn type are located in isolated spots, a fact possibly explained in terms of the privileged social position of the individuals buried, who were known as *logades* (the chosen ones). They could be members of the entourage of Attila, vassal princes of the Hun Empire, particularly eastern Germans, which lie near the symbols of their endowment³³.

So, how can we explain the presence of similar artefacts at Portuguese sites? Can we justify the occurrence of these materials through the passage of Late Roman military contingents, which, because of their origin or by assimilation, wore distinctive Hun type' elements? It is possible that most of these adornments, in particular masculine objects connected with the 'barbaric' eastern Danubian world, which arrived in Hispania in the first decades of the fifth century, are not necessarily related to the invasions of the year 409. Indeed, they may well have been brought by Roman soldiers of Oriental descent who embraced the so-called 'Danubian fashion'³⁴.



FIG. 5 Adornment made of gold, with an inlay of a single garnet. This object may have been a decorative element of a sword guard. Photo courtesy of the National Archaeology Museum (Lisbon).

²⁸ Supiot 1934, 53-54; Viana 1953, 185, 187-188; Santa-Olalla 1934, 169-170; Figueiredo & Paço 1974, 17-18; Almeida 1962, 108, 239-241, 251; Alarcão 1986, 152-154; Mattoso 1992, 338, 344; Rodríguez-Aragón 1997, 631, 635; Lebedynsky

2001, 81, n° 1, 123; Resino 2003, 296; *id.* 2004, 124-126; Aillagon & Roberto 2008, 364; Arezes 2011, 77, 112-113, 119, 129-130, 211-214, 369-370.

²⁹ Figueiredo & Paço 1974, 17-18.

³⁰ Lebedynsky 2001, 83.

³¹ Kazanski 1991, 76.

³² Lebedynsky 2001, 82.

³³ Rodríguez-Aragón 1997, 634; Resino 2003, 286.

³⁴ Rodríguez-Aragón 1997, 641.

2.3 Fibulae (Conimbriga and Falperra)

Although so far we have no knowledge about the existence of any occurrence of eagle-shaped or trilaminar fibulae specifically in Portugal³⁵, we present some of the most ancient ‘Germanic’ fibulae discovered in this territory. Almost all of these types of metallic elements were recovered from Conimbriga, and their remains are conserved in the Monographic Museum dedicated to the study and investigation of the site and its collections.

There are five objects, recovered from Conimbriga, that are part of the *Armbrustfibeln* group: two of Duratón type, two of Rouillé type and another one of Siscia type³⁶. In the *Bügelknopffibeln* group, only one known example can be identified, integrated into the Conimbriga type (fig. 6); however, beyond the abovementioned fibulae, we are aware of the existence of another example of *Bügelknopffibeln*, which was recovered from Falperra and belongs to the Desana type³⁷.

Finally, there is a specific group of three fibulae, all recovered from Conimbriga, which raises doubts as to its classification: some authors recognise in them characteristics related with the *Armbrustfibeln* group; others indicate specific characteristics that could place them in the *Bügelknopffibeln* group³⁸. Actually, González explains that the most particular feature that the three fibulae present is the fact that spring and needle do not constitute independent elements, since they are structured from the bow itself. Still, they are part of a common trunk, with roots in Eastern Europe and, particularly, in the area related to the Sintana de Murs culture³⁹, characteristic from specific groups and sometimes associated with the example from Tchernjahov⁴⁰.

At this point, it must be noted that there is no consensus on the suggested classification, and that there are widely differing interpretations and hypotheses concerning the typological integration of early Portuguese fibulae⁴¹.



FIG. 6 Profile photo of the only example of fibula of the Conimbriga type, integrated into the group of *Bügelknopffibeln*.

Less problematic is the identification of Germania Libera as the place of origin of these objects. They were widespread abroad, mainly through the movements of Barbarian mercenaries integrated into the Roman army in Late Antiquity. This could explain the similarities between the findings from Portuguese sites, namely Conimbriga or Falperra, and the Central Europeans specimens, attributed to the Sueves and dated to the 5th century or the beginning of the 6th⁴².

With regard to the *Armbrustfibeln* group from Conimbriga, it is possible to point out parallels for the two specimens of the Rouillé type: an example recovered from the eponymous site of Rouillé (France), and another discovered in Asotokoe (Lithuania). For the single example of the Siscia type, the similarities point to fibulae found in Bozen and Venusio (Italy) and to materials collected from Teurnia and Peggau (Austria) as well as in Siscia (Yugoslavia), the site that gives the name to the fibula type. Also within the *Armbrustfibeln* group there are parallels between the specimens of Duratón type and fibulae found in burial sites located in the Spanish territory: Cerro de San Juan, Briviesca (Burgos), Madrona (Segovia) and, of course, Duratón (Segovia).

Regarding the *Bügelknopffibeln* group, there are resemblances between the artefacts of the Conimbriga type and some recovered from the Spanish burial sites mentioned above⁴³. Beyond these, however, other fibulae can also serve as parallels, such as the one discovered in Dantcheny cemetery (Soviet Union), which is associated with the Tchernjahov culture⁴⁴. Regarding the Desana type, found in Falperra and presently conserved in the Archaeology Museum D. Diogo de Sousa (Braga), identical specimens are known from Rimini (Italy), Erding-Alternending and Bordesolm (Germany) as well as Desana itself⁴⁵.

Finally, and most difficult to classify, there are also some objects that display similarities to three specific artefacts recovered from Conimbriga. One was found in Santa Vitória do Ameixial, Estremoz, and another in Idanha-a-Velha, both part of the Portuguese territory. Salete da Ponte classifies these five fibulae within Type Ponte 47, connected to the *Armbrustfibeln* group⁴⁶. But this is a problematic issue, since certain characteristics that could justify the integration in the group are not present. In any case and despite the doubts concerning the classification, it seems certain that these objects reveal parallels to fibulae recovered from Svábenice (Mähren, Moravia) or, more generically, to artefacts found in Suevic sites, located in Slovakia or Moravia, Central Europe⁴⁷.

It may be possible to connect the occurrence of this type of material in the Portuguese territory with the arrival of the Suevic people and, in the case of Conimbriga, to the attacks and sacking that took place in that Roman *municipium* in the second half of the 5th century. The *Chronicum* of Hydatius, bishop of Aqua Flaviae (Chaves, Portugal), the most important written source

³⁵ Arezes 2011, 105-106.

³⁶ González 1989, 182-186, 205-206; Alarcão 1994, 134; Resino 2003, 284; *id.* 2004, 119-120; Ponte 2006, 483; Arezes 2011, 107-109. We note that only one specimen of Duratón type was analysed at the Conimbriga Monographic Museum.

³⁷ González 1989, 180-186, 204-206, 212; Alarcão 1994, 134; Quiroga & Lovelle 1999, 230; Resino 2003, 284; *id.* 2004, 119-120; Ponte 2006, 387,

483-484; Arezes 2011, 62-63, 199-200.

³⁸ Alarcão *et al.* 1979, 115-116; González 1989, 182-186, 205-206, 212; Alarcão 1994, 134; Rodríguez-Aragón 1997, 629-634, 641; Resino 2003, 284, 295; *id.* 2004, 119-120; Ponte 2006, 387-389, 482-483, Arezes 2011, 189-192, 197-198.

³⁹ González 1989, 182.

⁴⁰ Rodríguez-Aragón 1997, 633.

⁴¹ Arezes 2011, 107-109.

⁴² González 1989, 184-185; Arezes 2011, 107-108.

⁴³ González 1989, 183-184; Arezes 2011, 185-186.

⁴⁴ Kazanski 1991, 132.

⁴⁵ González 1989, 184; Arezes 2011, 199-200.

⁴⁶ Ponte 2006, 386, 482-483.

⁴⁷ González 1989, 182-183; Rodríguez-Aragón 1997, 634.

to the understanding of events at the time of Hispania's 'invasion', refers to two terrible assaults against Conimbriga. About the first, dated to 465, it says the Sueves robbed the possessions of Cantaber's family and took the mother and her sons captive⁴⁸. According to the same source, Conimbriga was pillaged three years later, part of the walls and buildings destroyed, the people imprisoned and deported, the region converted to a desert⁴⁹.

The *Chronicum* presents, in chronological order, all events that took place from 379, the year Theodosius the Great was proclaimed Emperor, to 469. By this time, Hydatius's death was imminent⁵⁰. Historians' opinions on his writings are divided. Certainly they should be approached critically, especially given the solid Roman education of the bishop and his loyalty to the Empire which led him to paint a tragic and sometimes apocalyptic picture, reflecting his anguish and fear as well as those of local people⁵¹. However, during the years of excavations known as the *Fouilles de Conimbriga*, evidence was found that substantiated Hydatius's claims. Although the devastation was not as drastic as he had described it, the 5th-century material, the destruction layers and fire levels in the forum and in the cryptoporticus support his narrative. Nevertheless, and contrary to the idea of the death of the city, Conimbriga survived, and was later occupied by Visigoths⁵².

2.4 Buckles (Castelo Velho, Conimbriga and Monsanto da Beira)

Regarding the bronze buckles, there are some hypotheses that can explain their discovery in the Portuguese territory. The first, with a semi-circular ring, was recovered from Castelo Velho⁵³. It presents identical features to a specimen published by Rodríguez-Aragón: the Burgos belt buckle⁵⁴.

Although this type of buckle was produced in Hispania, it was clearly inspired by imported models and reveals early signs of Germanic influence in the northwest, during the transition from the 4th to the 5th century and lasting until the middle of the latter⁵⁵.

The artefact recovered from Monsanto is decorated with beasts on the rim, facing the axis around which articulates the needle. It is interesting to note that it reveals some similarities with a group of belt-buckles, bounded with large metal plates and cut out decoration. However, there are direct parallels between this specimen and two foreign belt-buckles, one retrieved from Can Bosch de Basea (Barcelona) and another from La Bienvenida (Ciudad Real). As in the case of the object retrieved from Castelo Velho, the origin of these artefacts raises some doubts. Could they have been produced in the peninsular territory? This suggestion is difficult to substantiate, especially given the complexity of the decoration on the abovementioned objects. In this sense, it is important to consider the possibility that these elements could have been produced beyond the Pyrenees, between the last decades of the 4th and the first half of 5th century⁵⁶.

As for the other buckles, of rectangular or trapezoidal shape, recovered from Conimbriga⁵⁷ and Briteiros⁵⁸, these should correspond to peninsular productions, being part of the so-called 'Simancas type', as suggested by Marcus Sommer⁵⁹. This type is made up of a variety of shapes, appearing to derive directly from prototypes of *cingulae militae* dated to the 2th and 3th centuries. It divides up into two distinct branches: one includes objects with a flower decoration and the other those with a rectangular shape. The specimens collected from Conimbriga can be associated with the latter, whose origin dates back to the 3th century. In Hispania these buckles, rectangular in shape and bulging at the ends, eventually evolved into trapezoidal buckles, with well-developed appendages similar to balls⁶⁰. This applies to two of the buckles recovered from Conimbriga. The first is identical to an artefact found in La Morterona, located in Saldaña (Valencia) and to a group of buckles retrieved from a grave in Fuentesprada (Zamora), both sites located in the Spanish territory⁶¹. The second is similar to a bronze buckle recovered from Briteiros (Guimarães, Portugal)⁶².

In general, the chronology proposed for objects classified as 'Simancas type' ranges between the second half of the fourth century and the mid-fifth century. Thus, it is possible that these elements confirm the continuation of Legio VII troops in Late Antiquity, of which cantonments are reported in the *Notitia Dignitatum*. This may explain the archaic features presented by these types of artefacts⁶³. However, and given the limitations imposed on this research, different possibilities must continue to be considered.

3 Results and discussion

From this brief selection of early metallic adornments, mainly used over costume, it is clear that some foreign and very particular objects occur in Portugal. Far from being part of a homogeneous group, they clearly differ on several counts and raise questions concerning their presence in this territory. The answers are complex and the issue is as yet unresolved. The first question is whether it is possible to establish a direct connection between their occurrence and 'Barbarian' invasions in the 5th century. While this may explain Conimbriga's fibulae, it is not possible to generalise on the basis of that. The discovery of materials of Germanic origin on Portuguese archaeological sites may equally be the result of occasional military episodes.

Moreover, as in the case of Beja, for instance, the mercenaries who were part of the Roman Army could have brought adornments and other objects from Eastern Europe. Perhaps those soldiers continued to dress and adorn themselves according to customs in the Danube valley area and in the territories dominated by the Huns.

⁴⁸ Tranoy 1974, 171-173, §229, §230 §231.

⁴⁹ Tranoy 1974, 175, §241.

⁵⁰ Tranoy 1974, 16; Colodrón 2002, 287.

⁵¹ Tranoy 1974, 7, 18.

⁵² Alarcão & Étienne 1977, 10-11, 143, 165, 179.

⁵³ Oral information by A. Silva; Arezes 2011, 69, 217-218.

⁵⁴ Rodríguez-Aragón 1992, 248, 261.

⁵⁵ Rodríguez-Aragón 1992, 245, 255; Resino 2003, 283-284.

⁵⁶ Rodríguez-Aragón 1992, 246.

⁵⁷ Salellas 1969, 143, 151-152; Alarcão *et al.* 1979, 97, 100; Rodríguez-Aragón 1992, 249; Alarcão 1994, 142; Arezes 2011, 62, 114, 223-224, 229-232.

⁵⁸ Cardozo 1961, 453; Salellas 1969, 143, 151; Cardozo 1990, 55; Arezes 2011, 62, 114.

⁵⁹ Rodríguez-Aragón 1992, 248.

⁶⁰ Rodríguez-Aragón 1992, 248-249.

⁶¹ Compare with: Rodríguez-Aragón & Escartín 1989, 230; Rodríguez-Aragón 1992, 259.

⁶² Cardozo 1961, 453, fig. 5, n° 4; *id.* 1990, 55, fig. 15; Arezes 2011, 229-230.

⁶³ Rodríguez-Aragón 1992, 255.

In general, the identification of these 'barbaric' metallic elements in Western Europe has been linked to the presence, even if transitory, of people from southern Russia or from the lower Danube. However, it is important to note that the significance of these discoveries varies according to whether they were used by men or women; usually given less significance is attached to objects associated with male costume, because they can imitate the military apparatus of other nations. The decorative elements of women's clothing, on the other hand, are more linked to the preservation of ethnic tradition and conservatism, and are therefore of greater relevance in this context. In this sense, the extensive in-depth study of cemeteries and other burial contexts, with particular attention to the gender of the individuals buried and to the arrangement of the adornments and other artefacts in relation to the osteological remains, is essential to clarify some problematic issues. Given the way that particular elements that constitute 'Danubian fashion' appear in graves, it is possible to consider that apparatus in death were related to the condition of the individual when alive. And, in this sense, certain kinds of artefact would seek to transmit and perpetuate a hierarchic position to the world of Death.

Although, funerary archeology has its limitations. A grave-stone may not necessarily be a reflection of everyday life, in that it may reveal a specific composition on death.

Despite the heterogeneity of the materials discussed in this article, it is clear that they have some commonalities. They comprise a group of personal adornments associated with the migration

of people of Germanic origin. Nevertheless, it is possible that successive 'gift giving' sequences as manifestations of power relations can explain the occurrence of some artefacts in specific archaeological contexts. This applies particularly to jewellery or weapons, the kind of gift that can be mentioned in written sources. Exchanging objects like these, particularly among members of the aristocracy, assumes a symbolic significance and emphasises the status of those involved in the process.

This question, however, along with several others, has not as yet been clarified, and is open to debate. Also, problems related to the 'ethnic' affiliation of the artefacts and issues connected to their geographic origin await further investigation.

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